

Annex 1 – FAQs for Applications to the Common Ground Program: Shaping Regions Across Borders

Question	Answer
Who can request a grant and what are the minimum requirements?	<p>Municipalities, municipal associations, German districts, or comparable entities from neighboring countries are welcome to request a grant.</p> <p>Other partners should be involved in the project from the very beginning: To express its interest in participating in the project, a municipal partner from the neighboring region must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). Additional LOIs from a civil society initiative or organization from both countries must also be submitted. Alternatively, if the main applicant does not yet have any civil society partners, a description of the local civil society network must be submitted in place of the LOI indicating the network actors with whom the applicant plans to collaborate. Larger network structures, such as Euro-regions, which have demonstrated their willingness to cooperate by submitting an LOI will also be considered as partners. Additional LOIs from civil society, business, or science are desirable.</p> <p>In principle, a civil society organization may also request a grant if it can demonstrate cooperation with a local authority. In addition to the LOI, the municipalities must prove their political support by contributing their own funds or services. The decisive factor here is the recognizable political will to initiate participation structures.</p> <p><u>N.B.: The main applicant may only be a charitable organization. Associated partners can be organized in the private sector within the framework of collaborations (see Annex 2: Charitable Status).</u></p>
Which regions can apply?	<p>The program relates to border regions in Germany and its neighboring countries. By border regions, we mean regions that fall on Germany's borders and encompass areas both within Germany and the neighboring country or countries, that is to say they form a common border area. The size of the region is not specified.</p>

What is expected from applicants?

Applications to the *Common Ground* program must meet the following requirements:

- **Willingness** of program partners **to collaborate** on both sides of the border. Among other factors, this is evidenced by the fact that a substantial part of the financial support is used in the respective neighboring country.
- **Willingness** to contribute their **own labor and resources** to the organization and implementation of the cross-border participation project. In addition, applicants would ideally raise further funds to finance the participation project.
- **Willingness** on the part of the local authorities to **establish permanent structures** for cross-border participation that will last beyond the duration of the program.
- **Interest in networking and sharing experience** with other regions involved in the *Common Ground* program. For this purpose, regular workshops and meetings involving representatives of the funded regions are planned for the duration of the program.
- Willingness to **participate in the program's accompanying research**, e.g. participation in interviews and answering questionnaires.

What does the funding cover?

The funding for up to eight selected border regions includes:

Support and advice: Program participants receive individual advice and support in the development and implementation of participation formats and processes from the nexus Institute and regional participation advisors.

Funding: The Robert Bosch Stiftung provides a total of €1.3 million for the implementation of trans-sectoral, cross-border participation processes in up to eight border regions. The amount of funding varies, depending on the needs of the region. The municipalities involved must contribute their own funds and are encouraged to raise further funding during the three years.

Qualification: Further training programs ensure the professional implementation of participation processes based on the latest scientific findings and practical expertise. The focus is on developing employee skills in local administrations.

	<p>Networking: Numerous different events for networking and exchange formats are offered for actors in the border regions as part of the program.</p> <p>Visibility: Accompanying communication measures create public attention for projects across the regions.</p>
How are the funds disbursed?	The Robert Bosch Stiftung disburses the entire funding amount for each region to a single applicant. This applicant is responsible for administering the funds and passing them on to the other funding partners (neighboring municipalities, partners from civil society).
What type of funding is involved?	The funding can be used to finance personnel and material costs. The contribution of own funds is compulsory, but not fixed as a percentage. These own funds can also be benefits in kind, such as the provision of premises, working hours, or similar. Co-financing from another funding partner is desirable but not mandatory at the time of application. There will be no shortfall financing for municipal budgets.
What is the goal behind the funding?	The overriding goal of the three-year funding is to establish long-term, cross-border participation structures and to strengthen democratic culture in the border region, including as many population groups as possible.
Who should the participation formats be aimed at?	<p>Funding will only be granted for participation processes that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. focus on reaching and involving working-age adults, and 2. use innovative and real-world-focused formats to appeal primarily to people who do not (or cannot) usually participate in traditional offerings.
What does the program mean by participation?	Participation is understood to mean any form of involving the general population and other actors in political design and decision-making processes. This includes all different levels of participation – from consultation to involvement and co-determination to co-decision-making. Support is given to dialogical participation processes and formats that serve the exchange and formation of opinions on an equal footing. The participation process should aim to prepare or to offer advice on relevant political decisions in the border region. Simply providing information is not considered participation within the <i>Common Ground</i> program.

<p>How may civic participation in border regions look like?</p>	<p>A variety of different methods and procedures for participation exist. Differences may include the number of people involved, the duration, the complexity, and the type of results. When selecting suitable formats, it is important to respond to the topic and target group with flexibility and to design the process accordingly. Combining different formats also plays a key role.</p> <p>For example, a possible format would be organizing a two-hour open citizens' workshop at the beginning of a participation process to collect potential topics. These topics could be further explored in subsequent stakeholder-citizen focus groups and the results could be used to establish a topic for participation and initial ideas for next steps. Other formats could be, for instance, all-day workshops in which citizens are informed about the issue at hand by experts and then develop their own recommendations in an alternation of small group work and plenary discussions. It may also be useful to set up an advisory board of citizens and stakeholders to accompany the participation process throughout its entire duration.</p> <p><u>The formats listed serve only as examples for illustrative purposes.</u></p>
<p>Does participation in the program imply the use of a specific participation process?</p>	<p>No. The specific design and aims of a participation process are heavily reliant on the topic at hand as well as on the local conditions and should be needs-based. A participation process supported by <i>Common Ground</i> should, where possible, bring together the strengths of a range of participation processes. The use of innovative formats and combinations – such as bringing together digital and analog – is expressly encouraged.</p>
<p>We want to establish a culture of participation in our border region but don't yet have a topic. Can we still apply?</p>	<p>Absolutely! If you are yet to decide on a topic for the participation process, finding and setting out the topic can form the start of the participation process. For instance, residents of the region can formulate the topics and individual participation steps and formats with relevant actors from politics and administration in setting the agenda.</p>
<p>What is funded?</p>	<p>Through the program, preference is given to projects that meet all the following points. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - create long-term, sustainable cross-border structures for participation, - carry out specific processes for participation with different formats and methods on a (politically) relevant topic,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - present a realistic project plan, - can demonstrate a willingness to implement the results of cross-border participation in regional structures, - involve residents in political decisions at the earliest possible point, - provide for broad participation with a focus on adults and address in particular people who have not yet been reached.
Which projects are not eligible for funding?	<p>Ineligible projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One-off participation projects whose goals fail to promote the development of long-term structures for participation. - Participation formats with the sole aim of sharing information. - Participation formats for political decisions that have already been made and which the citizens are simply supposed to confirm (sham participation). - The financing of infrastructural and construction measures or of specific measures that aim to promote tourism. However, the financing of participation processes for infrastructural or construction measures or tourism projects is permitted. - The financing and implementation of legally prescribed (formal) participation. However, the support of voluntary (informal) participation processes which accompany and supplement legally prescribed participation is possible.
What needs to be included in the detailed application to be submitted by February 15, 2022?	<p>The presentation of the participation process is a central part of the application. It should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what will be achieved through participation in the region, - the added value the participation process will bring for decision-makers, - how and to what extent actors on both sides will be involved, - why population involvement is being pursued, - how and when the results are to be implemented. <p>In addition, the topic of participation should be described in greater detail. If the topic is yet to be determined, a description of a strategy must be set out for identifying the topic (agenda-setting strategy).</p>

How can I apply?

Applying for the *Common Ground* program is a two-step process.

1. The first stage involves submitting your expression of interest by November 15, 2021. All you need to do is register on the Robert Bosch Stiftung **portal** (<https://portaldev.bosch-stiftung.de/>) and give a brief overview of your project idea. Please fill out all the information required. On the third page of the portal, you will be asked to select the topic of your idea. Please go to “**Global Issues**” and select the sub-item “**Democracy**”. To ensure we can allocate your application correctly, please select “Application for the *Common Ground* program” as the title.
 2. All applicants who have registered by November 15, 2021, will be invited to a day-long workshop on “Good Participation in Municipalities”, which takes place at the end of November. The workshop will provide further information on the Common Ground program and the call for applications. The time and location of the event will be announced in due time.
 3. Between the end of November and mid-February, interested regions will receive ongoing advice by telephone or video conference on how to create their application. This includes searching for suitable topics for participation, support in designing the participation process, the search for suitable partners and supporters, as well as the clarification of further individual questions of the applicants.
 4. The final application form, LOIs, and project and budget plans must be submitted to the Robert Bosch Stiftung by **February 15, 2022**. Documents may only be submitted by email to the following address: common.ground@bosch-stiftung.de.
 5. In March, a selection committee (Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH and nexus Institut GmbH) will review and evaluate the applications. Up to eight border regions will be selected for funding.
 6. In the first half of April, the selected regions will be invited to an interview via video conference. During the interview, the Robert Bosch Stiftung will clarify any final questions regarding the application.
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	<p>7. In April/May, the selected border regions will enter into a funding agreement with the Robert Bosch Stiftung. In the process, questions of charitable status and the administration of financial resources are clarified as a matter of priority within the framework of a formal application.</p> <p>8. The first grants are expected to begin in June 2022.</p>
What is the deadline for submitting a final application?	The submission deadline is February 15, 2022 , at midnight . The detailed application must be sent to the Robert Bosch Stiftung by email (common.ground@bosch-stiftung.de) only. For more information about the program and the application process, please visit www.bosch-stiftung.de/common-ground .
Can I also print out the online form and submit it by mail?	No. Please understand that only applications sent as a completed application form via email to common.ground@bosch-stiftung.de will be accepted.
How detailed does the pre-calculation of costs need to be?	The calculation of costs should be as detailed as possible at the time of application. As a rule of thumb, the activities named in the substantive project description should be reflected in the cost items in the budget plan.
Which activities or costs are ineligible for funding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The preparation, establishment, or operation of economic activities (sale of goods or services). This also includes making infrastructure available to private individuals free of charge or exchanging services. - Events held solely for the purpose of socializing. - The acquisition, construction, or renovation of real estate (land, buildings), even if they are later to be used for charitable activities. - Operating equipment not related to the project. - Ongoing infrastructure costs not related to the project. - Individual assistance for private individuals (e.g. therapy costs, cars). - Support for election campaigns of individual political parties/voters' associations. - Activities to support/oppose individual political parties or voters' associations.
Can the project already be up and running?	No. However, the project may be an addition or extension to existing projects. Nevertheless, it should be identifiable as an independent project.

How long is the funding period?	<p>The funding period is 36 months. Ideally, funding will begin no later than September 1, 2022, and last until August 31, 2025, at the latest.</p> <p>Following this period of pilot funding, selected border regions will receive further support in consolidating their structures for participation.</p>
What happens once the border regions have been chosen?	<p>At the beginning of the funding period, a needs assessment is carried out together with the nexus Institute. As part of this assessment, the participants' consulting needs as well as the existing landscape of participation are analyzed. Together, we consider which topics or issues come into question. Based on this, we will consider what a sustainable participation process might look like, which steps are necessary for successful implementation, and how these can be meaningfully and realistically translated into a project plan. The nexus Institute consulting process also involves selecting the actors from the region who should be included to ensure successful participation, as well as the strategy for approaching and activating the citizens who are to take part in the participation process. As part of consulting activities, nexus employees will also visit the regions selected on site to get a better picture of the framework conditions for the planned participation process.</p>
Who do I contact if I have any technical difficulties?	<p>In case of technical difficulties, please send an email to common.ground@bosch-stiftung.de, and we will get in touch with you.</p>
Who do I contact if I have questions about the content?	<p>If you are unsure whether your idea fits our program, please contact:</p> <p>nexus Institut Kerstin Franzl Tel.: +49 30 318 054 64 Email: common.ground@nexusinstitut.de</p>